



## Reduce Antibiotic Use – Reduce Antibiotic Resistance

Two main types of germs – bacteria and viruses, cause most infections. Antibiotics kill bacteria, not viruses. They will not cure colds, the flu, most coughs and viral bronchitis, runny noses, or sore throats not caused by strep.



Antibiotic resistance is one of the world's most pressing public health problems. At the same time, the pharmaceutical pipeline for new antibiotics is drying up. Instead, many drug manufacturers are developing medicines that are for chronic illnesses such as high cholesterol, diabetes, and arthritis.

The number of bacteria resistant to antibiotics has increased in the last decade. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly all significant bacterial infections in the world are becoming resistant to the most commonly prescribed antibiotics. Every time a person takes antibiotics, sensitive bacteria are killed, but resistant germs may be left to grow and multiply. Repeated and improper uses of antibiotics are major forces driving the increase in drug-resistant bacteria.

## What Can You Do?

### As a health care provider:

- ✓ Use more narrow spectrum antibiotics to treat bacterial infections.
- ✓ Take the time to explain to patients why an antibiotic might not be appropriate to use.
- ✓ Inform patients of the usual time course of their illness so that they know when to expect to feel better.
- ✓ Suggest supportive treatments if indicated, such as antihistamines, decongestants, analgesics, plenty of fluids, and rest.

### As a patient:

- ✓ Do not demand antibiotics when a health care provider has determined they are not needed.
- ✓ Take all medication as prescribed, even if symptoms disappear. If treatment stops too soon, some bacteria may survive and cause illness to worsen again.
- ✓ Do not share your medication with others, and do not take medicine prescribed for someone else.

The CDC has begun a national campaign to promote appropriate antibiotic use. Its objective is to decrease inappropriate use and thereby reduce the threat of antibiotic resistance.

For more information, please call 1-888-246-2675 or visit [www.cdc.gov/getsmart](http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart). For free *Get Smart* educational materials for your organization or health care site, please call Judy at 1-317-221-3022 or request an order form by e-mail at [jwhorton@hhcorp.org](mailto:jwhorton@hhcorp.org).

*Resources: Media Fact Sheet – Cold and Flu Season: No Reason for Antibiotics; Get Smart: Know When Antibiotics Work.*

### Editors Note:

Judy Whorton, R.N., is a nurse at the Marion County Health Department. She is working with the Indiana Coalition for Antibiotic Resistance Education Strategies (ICARES). ICARES is promoting The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Get Smart: Know When Antibiotics Work" program. This is a national campaign with the following objectives:

- Reduce inappropriate antibiotic use
- Reduce the spread of resistance to antibiotics

Judy is available for consultation with local health department staff and other health care professionals about the appropriate use of antibiotics. She also can provide educational materials that could be used for health fairs and other local campaigns.